

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

NO. 2554

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 30, 1898
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1855

*“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.
And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes:
and his face was bound about with a napkin.
Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”
John 11:43-44*

PERHAPS the legitimate topic of this discourse, after such a text, ought to be the resurrection of the dead. Lazarus had died—he had lain in his grave, at the invitation of his sisters, Jesus Christ came to see them, and His visit answered the double purpose of comforting the bereaved and restoring the dead. It would be a blessed and an excellent topic, were we for a little while to dilate upon the wonders of the resurrection. We shall do so for a few moments, and then we shall come to the principal theme of this evening, which will rather concern spiritual resurrection from a spiritual death, than that natural resurrection which is to take place upon us all by and by.

The very fact that Lazarus came from his grave, after he had lain there four days, and was corrupt, and that he was called from the sepulcher by the mighty voice of Jesus, is to us a proof that the dead shall rise at the voice of Jesus at the last great day. Every Christian believes that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, but unfortunately, the great doctrine of the resurrection is not by most of us made as prominent as it ought to be.

In old times, the resurrection was preached by the apostles as being the sum and substance of the Gospel. Wherever Paul went, we know that he spoke concerning the resurrection of the dead, and then “some mocked.” But now, usually, if we speak concerning the after state of the departed, we generally treat of immortality, not of resurrection.

Now, immortality was known to the ancients before the Gospel came. They believed in a kind of immortality, but resurrection never entered into the thoughts of the heathen. Many of them believed in the immortality of the soul. Those who had been enlightened by powerful reason, or remnants of ancient tradition, believed that the soul did not die, but lived on in a future state.

But immortality is not resurrection, and the immortality of the soul is very different from the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. We believe that the soul is immortal, and shall last forever, but we believe something more than that. We believe that the body is immortal too, and that after this body shall have been sown in the grave, in the Lord's good time it shall be raised again, and shall either be translated to heaven, there to enjoy bliss eternally, or else be sent down to hell, to suffer forever and ever.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead belongs peculiarly to the Christian dispensation, it was never taught by any rationalists or philosophers. They might hold the transmigration of souls, but the resurrection of the body they did not hold. But we as Christians, do really believe that this body which we now inhabit, though it must die and see corruption, shall be raised again from the dust—that though consumed on the funeral pyre, its ashes, scattered to the winds, shall yet come together again.

We believe that do what you will with the body—divide it, scatter it, mingle it—God, by the fiat of His omnipotence, shall rebuild the fabric to become the habitation of the living soul forever and forever.

We dare not in fact, deny this, because we are so expressly taught it in the sacred writings, and it has been so fully and satisfactorily proved by the apostle Paul.

And oh, my friends, is it not a blessed fact that we shall rise again? I see amongst my audience some whose garb of woe betokens that they have lost a friend, I see some whose timeworn countenances tell me that they must have buried a mother or a father, others I know, have laid beloved infants in the dust, others have had a precious husband or wife severed from their bosom. I mark among you some whose habiliments tell me you have been lately widowed or bereaved of one tenderly beloved.

Ah, despair not, you mourners! Here is a fact for you, not only that your soul and the soul of your loved one shall meet in eternity, but that the same body on which you doted shall, if you are believers, be seen by you in heaven. The eyes of the tender and pious mother, which once dropped tears on you, shall behold you in heaven, and the hand of that pious father, now lying in the grave, that once lay on your head, and consecrated you to the Lord, shall be grasped by you in heaven.

Not only shall the soul of that infant live forever and ever, but its beautiful body, which is dear to you as the casket which contained the soul of your child, shall live again. It shall not be a fictitious resurrection, it shall not be a new race of ethereal creatures, but actual bodies shall be ours. And oh! my brethren, if you have been bereft of all your friends—if they have departed in the faith of Jesus, you shall see them again. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

But yet more blessed are they to be, “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,” and we shall see the bodies of those we once loved on earth. Those bodies we once silently gazed upon, as they lay in all the stiffness of death, we shall see quickened and glorified, that mortal shall “put on immortality,” that corruptible shall “put on incorruption.” It was “sown in weakness,” and we wept when we saw it lowered into the grave, but it shall be “raised in power.” It was “sown a natural body,” and though it shall be “raised a spiritual body,” yet it shall be a body to all intents and purposes, as it was before, and we shall recognize it as such.

*“Oh, sacred hope! Oh, blissful hope,
That Jesu’s grace has given;
The hope, when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven!”*

Not in a separate existence of souls merely, but souls and bodies too, and—

*“There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our wearied (bodies as well as) souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”*

Ah, beloved! does not this make Christianity worth having? Does not this light up the grave with a supernatural splendor—this cheering, this glorious, this overpowering, this more than natural, this superhuman doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? I will not stop to picture the scene—I might tell you of the silent graves, and of the churchyards covered with the grass of ages, I might picture to you the battlefields, I might bid you hear the voice of Jesus when, descending with the sound of the trumpet, and with an exceeding great army of angels, He shall say, “Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment!”

When He cries, “Awake!” eyes that have been glazed for many a year shall open, bodies that have long been stiffened, shall regain their energy, and stand upright. Not sheeted ghosts, not phantoms, not visions, but actual beings shall rise, *they*—the same persons who were buried—the real men, the real women. I think I see them bursting the cerements of the grave, dashing open their coffin lids, and coming forth. Ah! we shall see them, and each one for himself shall rise. There shall rise Lazarus, and

Martha, and Mary, and loved ones that belong to us, whom long we have wept as departed, we shall then rejoice over as having been recovered.

So much by way of preliminary remarks concerning the resurrection from the dead.

Now let us deal with the subject in another manner. The death of Lazarus, his burial in the tomb, and his corruption, are a figure and picture of the spiritual condition of every soul by nature. The voice of Jesus, crying, "Lazarus, come forth," is an emblem of the voice of Jesus, by His Spirit, which quickens the soul, and the fact that Lazarus, even when alive, wore his grave clothes for a little while, until they were taken from him, is extremely significant, for if we allegorize upon it, it teaches us that even when a soul is quickened into spiritual life, it still wears some of its grave clothes, which are only torn off when Jesus afterwards says, "Loose him, and let him go."

We propose therefore, to consider these three points: first, *the slumber of death*, in which every soul lies by nature, secondly, *the voice of life*, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth," and thirdly, *the partial bondage* which even the living soul has to endure, which is emblemized by Lazarus coming forth bound hand and foot, and having his face wrapped about with a napkin.

I. First then, we have here THE SLUMBER OF DEATH, in which all of us do lie by nature.

Come with me now, Christian, to "the rock whence thou wast hewn," to "the hole of the pit"—to the miry clay—"whence thou wast digged." Come with me to the house of death, for there your soul once lay, "dead in trespasses and sins." There are some in this world, we know, who utterly deny that the sinner is really dead in sins. I remember, some time ago, hearing a preacher assert that, though the Scriptures said that men were dead, it meant a metaphorical death—that they were not really and actually dead, but only metaphorically so.

Now, I always like, when there is a metaphor, to keep to the metaphor. Some of the eminent doctors in Rowland Hill's day said that there were no such beings as angels, that they were only Oriental metaphors. "Very well," said Rowland Hill, "then it was a company of Oriental metaphors that sang at the birth of Christ, 'Glory to God in the highest.' Angels are Oriental metaphors, then it was an Oriental metaphor that slew 185,000 of Sennacherib's army in a single night. Angels are Oriental metaphors, then it was an Oriental metaphor that appeared to Peter in prison, that knocked off his chains, and led him through the streets. Truly," said he, "these Oriental metaphors are wonderful things!"

We will try the same rule here. "You hath He metaphorically quickened, who were metaphorically dead in trespasses and sins!" A fine metaphorical Gospel that is! Then again, "To be carnally minded, is metaphorical death, but to be spiritually minded, is metaphorical life and peace." Such language does not mean anything at all. My friends, it is all nonsense about metaphorical death, men are *really* dead in a spiritual sense.

But I must tell you in what this death consists. There are different grades of life, understand that to commence with. There is the life of a plant, which a stone does not possess, therefore a stone is dead. There is the life of an animal, which the plant does not possess, and if you were speaking of animal life, you might describe the plant as to that extent dead. Then again, there is mental life, and since the animal has no mind, you might say that the animal is mentally dead.

Then there is a grade beyond the soulish life of a man—a spiritual life. To an ungodly man, there are only two parts—soul and body, to the Christian, there are three—body, soul, and *spirit*, and as a body without a soul would be dead naturally, so a man without a spirit, a man who has not had a spark struck off from the great orb of light called God, is spiritually dead. Nevertheless, there are some who assert that men who are ungodly are spiritually alive. Come, sinner, if you think thus, I must argue with you a little while.

First of all, if you are spiritually alive, and can do spiritual actions, the first thing I ask you is, *Why do you not do them now?* Some men say that they can repent and believe when they like, and they do not believe that, to do this, they need the power of the Spirit. Then sir, if you can do it, and do not do it, if any man deserves to be damned, it is you, and on your own showing, if there is a corner of the pit hotter than another, you ought to be put there.

The next thing I have to say to you, O sinner, is this, you say, "I am not dead, I have spiritual life, and can pray, and repent, and believe," let me ask, *Have you tried to do it?* Do you say, "Yes"? Well then, I know you will confess, unless you will lie before God, that you have found out your inability. There never was a man yet who strove to pray sincerely before God, but he felt something repressing his devotion. When he has come before God, under an agony of guilt, crying out for mercy, he has felt at times as if he could not pray, as if he could not utter a single word.

Have none of you known what it is to be in such a condition that you cannot pray, that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, when you put your hand on your heart and say, "O God! my heart is hard, I wish it would melt, I cannot break it"? When you would pray, do you not feel that your heart is far away, wandering in the world? The best method of proving a man's inability is to set him about doing the thing. When the young man said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," Jesus, just to try him, said, "Go and sell that thou hast."

Ah, beloved! when God brought us to Himself, we wrestled in prayer, and pleaded with him, but we were taught, after all, that the power for everything spiritual must come from God, for there were certain times and seasons when we could no more have prayed than we could have flown up to heaven, when we could no more have believed than we could have taken the moon in our hands. We could not grasp a promise, we could not grapple with a single temptation, we felt ourselves to be powerless, lost, dead.

Sinner! I tell you, you are dead, as to all spiritual matters, and dead you ever will be, if left to yourself, and you cannot by any means carry yourself to heaven. The sovereign will and power of God alone must quicken you, or else you can do nothing except sin. Neither righteous acts nor coming to Jesus can you ever do of yourself.

But I think I hear someone say, "*If I cannot do anything, I will sit down where I am, and make myself content.*" What, man! will you sit down, when hell blazes before you, when the pit is yawning at your feet, when damnation stares you in the face, when God is angry with you, when your sins are bellowing out to high heaven for condemnation? Will you sit down? I tell you, you cannot and dare not sit down. Sit down? As well might a man sit on yonder housetop, when the flames are rioting around him, as well might he float down the rapids, to be at once dashed to pieces.

Ah! if you talk about sitting down, you give me the best proof in all the world that you are "dead in trespasses and sins," for if you were not dead, you would be beginning to cry out, "O God, quicken me! O God, give me life! I know that I am dead, I feel that I can do nothing, but You have promised to do it all for me, though I am less than nothing, You have omnipotence to give me life."

Do you not see man, that I am putting you down that Christ may pick you up? Do you not see that I am laying you low, not to perish, not to be trampled on in the dust, but rather that, like a corn of wheat, you might fall into the ground and die, and afterwards be quickened, and bring forth fruit? For nothing can bring a man into a state of life so well as a feeling of death, and if I could get my hearers, one and all, to recognize, acknowledge, and feel that they were in a state of spiritual death, and utterly powerless, I could then have hope for them, for no man can confess himself to be dead, and yet sit down contentedly, he will cry out for grace, and ask God to deliver him from that death.

But there is one thing I have yet to tell you, before I pass away from this point, and it is, that *the ungodly man is something more than dead*. He is like Lazarus lying in his tomb. You remember those homely words which Martha used to Jesus, they are translated into plain Saxon, and I daresay the Hebrew is quite as expressive, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Ay, brethren, and this is the condition of every ungodly man, he is not only dead, but he has become positively corrupt in God's sight.

There are some here, to whom I might point at this moment, who know what I mean when I say they not only groan under a sense of spiritual death, but feel themselves to be a stench in their own nostrils, and in God's also. I ask you, poor convinced sinner, does there live or exist in this world a greater nuisance than yourself?

I know you will say, “No, there may be other filthy and abominable things, but I feel myself to be the most loathsome incarnation of filthiness that ever could have existed, I did not always think myself to be so, but I do now. I feel that I am not simply dead and powerless, but I feel offensive to myself, so that I wish I could run away from myself, and I feel offensive moreover to God, utterly obnoxious to Him.”

Well then, if that is your feeling, you are brought low enough, for it is just when we begin to corrupt, as the body of Lazarus did, and we, like Martha, are for giving everything up as hopeless, that Jesus Christ calls as He did then, “Lazarus, come forth!”

Now you see what I have made my congregation out to be. Some of you are alive—you have been quickened by God, but as for the rest of you, I am standing in an immense catacomb tonight, and all around me there are dead persons—in the gallery and down below—men and women who are spiritually dead.

II. But now comes the wonder working process, THE VOICE OF LIFE.

Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

We commence then, with this wonder working process by saying that *the giving of life to Lazarus was instantaneous*. There lay Lazarus in the grave, dead and corrupt. Jesus cried aloud, “Lazarus, come forth.” We do not read that a single moment elapsed between the time when Christ said the word and when Lazarus came out of his grave. It did not take the soul an instant to wing its way from Hades into the body of Lazarus, nor did that body need any delay to become alive again. So, if the Lord speaks to a man, and quickens him to spiritual life, it is an instantaneous work.

There are some of you standing there, apparently alive, but you feel, you acknowledge, you confess, that you are dead. Well, if the Lord speaks to you tonight, life will come into you in a moment, in one single instant. The power of grace is shown in this, that it converts a man instantly, and on the spot. It does not take hours to justify—justification is done in a moment, it does not take hours to regenerate—regeneration is done in a second. We are born, and we die, naturally, in instants, and so it is with regard to spiritual death and spiritual life, they occupy no period of time, but are done instantly, whenever Jesus speaks.

Oh! If my Master would tonight cry, “Lazarus, come forth,” there is not a Lazarus here—although covered with the shroud of drunkenness, bound about with the belt of swearing, or surrounded with a huge sarcophagus of evil habits and wickedness—who would not burst that sarcophagus, and come forth a living man.

But mark, *it was not the disciples, but Jesus, who said, “Lazarus, come forth.”* How often have I striven to preach you, if possible, into life, but that could not be done. I remember, when I have preached at different times in the country, and sometimes here, that my whole soul has agonized over men, every nerve of my body has been strained, and I could have wept my very being out of my eyes, and carried my whole frame away in a flood of tears, if I could but win souls. On such occasions, how we preach, as if we had men before us personally, and were clutching them, and begging them to come to Christ!

But with all that, I know I never made a soul alive yet, and never shall, and I am perfectly conscious that all the pleadings of all the living ambassadors from God will never induce a sinner to come to Jesus, unless Jesus comes to that sinner. Peter might have cried for a long while, “Lazarus, come forth,” before Lazarus would have moved an inch, so might James or John, but when Jesus does it, it is done to purpose.

Oh! Does not this lower the pride of the minister? What is he? He is a poor little trumpet through which God blows, but nothing else. In vain do I scatter seed, it is on God the harvest depends, and all my brethren in the ministry might preach till they were blind, but they would have no success unless the Spirit attended the quickening Word.

But poor soul, though the hearer cannot do it, and although the minister cannot do it, I want to persuade you, if I can, that tonight, *dead as you are, Jesus can speak you to life*. Let me single out a

character, for I like to do that. There is a man who says, “I have been living fifty years in sin, and tonight I am worse than ever, my old habits bind me hand and foot, and I have no hope of being delivered.”

Now, if tonight, my hearer, Jesus says, “Lazarus, come forth,” you will come forth in an instant. “Nay, but,” say you, “I am corrupt.” Ah! but Christ is mightier than your corruption. Do you say, “I am dead”? Nay, but Christ is “life.” Do you say, “I am bound hand and foot, and in a dungeon of darkness”? Nay, but Christ is a light in darkness, and He will disperse the gloom. You say, perhaps, “I do not deserve it,” but Jesus cares nothing for deserving. The dead body of Lazarus deserved nothing, it was putrid, and only deserved to have the stone covering it forever. “Roll away the stone,” says Christ, and oh, what noisomeness issued forth!

And there may be some from whom Jesus Christ may have rolled away the stone tonight, and they may be standing at their own graves, and feeling themselves loathsome and offensive. But still, my hearer, offensive as you are, Jesus asks no merit of you, He will give you His merits. It is only for Him to say, “Come forth,” and you yourself will this night come forth from your grave, and be made alive in Christ Jesus. Oh! may our God wake many dead souls that may be present, and bring them to life by His summons, “Lazarus, come forth.”

I think I hear another person saying, “Ah! but I am afraid, sir, that if I were told to come forth, the devil would not let me, he has been oppressing me so long, he has been trying to keep me down, and to make me lie still in my grave, I feel that he is now sitting upon my breast, and weighing down all my hopes, and quenching all my love.” Ah! but let me tell you, sinner, there is not one down in hell that is so mighty as Christ is in heaven. The evil one is in Christ’s power, and if you will but call upon Him, if He has enabled you only to utter a groan this night, He will cry unto you, “Come forth,” and you shall live.

III. Now let us turn for a few moments to the last point, and that is, THE PARTIAL BONDAGE.

Even when a soul is called by divine grace from death to life, yet it often wears its grave clothes for a long while. Many of my dear friends are afraid they are not converted, because they are not like Mr. So-and-so, or Mrs. So-and-so, they have not so much faith and assurance, and do not know as much as others, so they are afraid they are not alive. I have a word of comfort for them. The fact that Lazarus came forth in his grave clothes, with a napkin wrapped about his head, teaches us that many of us, though we are alive in Christ, still have our grave clothes on.

I believe many Arminians still have their napkin about their head, that is to say, they have not got quite free from trusting in works. They used, when dead, to believe in salvation by works—they do not now, but still they have some remnants of their grave clothes hanging about them. They have not yet come to believe that salvation is by sovereign grace alone, but will have some works mixed up with it. They fear that, after all, God may cast them out of the covenant.

Oh, if we could but tear their napkin off! We will not quarrel with them, we will not be angry with them, but we think we hear Jesus Christ say to us, “Loose them, and let them go,” and we will try all the ways in our power, by preaching, to pull the napkin from their eyes, and let them see, “free election known by calling,” full salvation, matchless security, discriminating grace, particular redemption, and all those things that make up the great strength of the Gospel of Jesus.

This, however, is not the point I want to dwell on with you, because I think most of you have got that napkin off your eyes. But *when we first obtain spiritual life, how many grave clothes there are hanging about us!* A man who has been a drunkard, even though he becomes a living child of God, will sometimes find his old habits clinging to him. I have known many drunkards give up their drunkenness, but when they have been going by a bar they have thought that, for the life of them, they could not keep from going in, and they have often well-nigh gone astray, and their feet have almost slipped.

And the man who has been a swearer will confess that there have been times when the vile words have almost come from his lips—perhaps not quite—I hope not, but there will be enough to show that he has some of his grave clothes still hanging about him. We have known men who have indulged in other kinds of vices and sins, and whenever an opportunity has presented itself, there has been the old

feeling getting up and saying, “Let me do it, let me do it,” and they have strived to keep it down, but they have hardly been strong enough, the grave clothes have been about them still.

Those grave clothes will keep on very tightly until the habit is broken off, and I believe there is not a Christian living that has not some shreds of his grave clothes remaining, and that, until we lie down in the grave, we shall carry them about with us.

Look at poor Paul, who could have been a more holy man than he? Yet he cried, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Let this comfort and cheer the man who has come to Christ, but who is yet striving against his corruption. Perhaps his unbelief says, “If you were a child of God, you would not have these wicked thoughts and inclinations.” But let me ask, do you hate those thoughts and inclinations? Then tell the devil, next time that he assails you thus, that he lies, for verily, this is not a sign that you are not the Lord’s, but rather a sign that you are His, for if you were not a child of God, you would not mind these things, but since you are His child, you strive against them.

These wicked grave clothes will show themselves sometimes, we know some who seem as if they could not get rid of their old angry tempers as long as they live. Their grave clothes have been rent in shreds by divine grace, they do not quite strap their arms up, but the shreds hang about them still, and our brethren, even though converted, still seem inclined sometimes to be hot and fierce, and we meet with instances now and then, even in the church, of some brethren who cannot exactly curb themselves, they have some of their grave clothes still about them.

Do not think I am speaking to exonerate or excuse you, I am striving to comfort you. You may be spiritually alive with these grave clothes on, if you struggle against them and try to get them off, but if you love them, they are not your grave clothes, but your living clothes, you are doing the work of your father, and his wages you shall have. If you feel your sins to be grave clothes, and are anxious to get rid of them, though you cannot conquer all your sins and corruptions, be not dismayed; trust in Christ, though the grave clothes yet hang about you, still trust His mercy and His grace, for by and by Jesus Christ shall say, “Loose him, and let him go.”

We are loosed first from one bad habit, and then from another. All the while I live, I feel that I carry some of my grave clothes about with me—the garment that encumbers me, and the sin that does most easily beset me. But by and by (it may only be tomorrow, it may be many years hence, perhaps some of you will pray for me that it may be many years, but I do not know why we should wish it, but by and by) the time will come and Christ will say, “Loose him, and let him go.”

I see one lying on his bed, the eye glancing upward to heaven, the pulses faint and few, the breath drawn heavily, the body decaying. What does all this mean? Why, it is the undoing of the wires of the cage, and in a little while, when sickness and pain have done their work, Christ will say, “Loose him, and let him go.” I remember hearing a brother minister telling me of his pious sister’s death bed. When she was very near dying, she said, “Sit me up a moment,” and they did. She then said—

*“Oh! that the final word were given,
Loose me, and let me rise to heaven,
And wrap myself in God.”*

In a moment or two, she fell back. God had said, “Loose her, and let her go.” Oh! how our disembodied spirits will rejoice when God says, “Loose them, and let them go.” We are fettered now, we shall be emancipated then. Then our spirits shall fly more rapidly than the flashing lightning, then shall they be wafted along, swifter than the gales of the North or the winds of the South. We shall fly upwards to our God, and be free forever from all that now distresses us, for God shall have said, “Loose them, and let them go.”

And now a thought or two, dear hearers, to finish up with. Before God will say, “Loose him, and let him go,” recollect, you must have had life. Now I come to this last solemn inquiry, *How many of us in this place tonight have life?* How frequently it is the case that we preach to our people with all our soul

and might, and yet nobody takes it home to himself! How often, my friends, have I preached in vain, from the simple fact that the hearer has listened, and there has been no application of it to his own soul! But, oh! I would not let you go, feeble as I am, and unable to say much to you, until I have tried to press this matter home upon your souls.

My hearers, in a little while I, too, must stand before God's bar, and when I think of it, it is enough to make me tremble. When I call to mind the tens and hundreds of thousands unto whom I have ministered the Word of the Gospel, and think, if there should on the last day, be found one person who shall lay his damnation to my charge, how horrible and terrible must be my lot! If, after having preached to others, I should have been unfaithful, and should prove a castaway, what an awful thing that would be!

In these days, when it is advertised that there is a special sermon to be preached, people rush off to hear a popular preacher, or somebody who happens to be much talked about, but do you know what that man does when he preaches, and what you do when you hear? Are you aware that every time that man stands in the pulpit, if he is unfaithful, he subjects himself to the wrath of God? Do you not know that if at last, that man who stands up to preach to the people, should have been discovered to have preached false doctrine, his doom must be horrible in the extreme? And do you recollect that, when you hear, it is not as if you go to see a play, or to listen to a recital? You are listening to a man who professes to speak by God, and for God, and to speak for your good, and his heart yearns over you.

Oh, it is solemn work to preach, and it should be solemn work to hear! For every preaching and every hearing the Lord will call us to account in the last great day, when He shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. What has the preacher talked of tonight?

He has told you, first, that you are all dead, and some of you will go away and laugh at it, but laughing at it will not make you alive. He has told you in the next place, that Christ can make you alive, and you despise that Christ, but mark, your despising Him will not free you from condemnation at the last great day. He has told you of the bands of death that some of you are bound with, and you are perhaps, tempted to smile, but mark you this, if you never sorrow over the bands of death here, you will have to wear clanking fetters forever. Did I speak of fiction when I said that? I speak not of fiction, but a dread reality.

There is, somewhere—God wots where it is—a place where the fire of Gehenna shall torture bodies forever, and where unutterable misery shall pain souls. And oh! tremble, you heavens, and shake, you hills! O earth, let your solid ribs of brass shake, and let your bowels be dissolved! It is a fact, and a fearful fact, that there is a hell.

I know not where it is, my spirit longs not to visit that dread region, but had it wings, it might fly somewhere, and it would find a hell—not a picture, not a dream, but a positive hell, and there are souls there this night, that are biting their bonds of iron, and shrieking out under inexpressible torture. And there are some of your friends and relations there perhaps—some whom you knew in the flesh—the man with whom you drained the wine cups, the harlot, the adulterer, the thief, and such-like persons. There they are in hell, at this hour.

Do you believe it? I do not think you do, but do you believe God's Word? Or are you hardy infidels, and deny it? "It is true," you say. Then are you so mad and irrational as to persevere in the road to there? O sirs, if there were some tremendous precipice, and I saw you hastily approaching it, would I not cry out to you and say, "Stop! Stop! Stop! There is ruin before you"? And may I not tonight plead with you for your life, that you may be led to stop your course of sin, for "the wages of sin is death," while the "gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," whom you are shunning, avoiding, and grieving?

Must I not plead with you? Shall you be going to hell blindfolded, and shall not one of your poor fellow creatures pull the bandage from your eyes? Shall he not call to you, without being thought mad, or an enthusiast? Well, if I am mad in that respect, may I ever be so, and if that is to be an enthusiast, let none be sober! But if it is mad and enthusiastic to go to heaven, how much more so is it to go to hell! O

God, show these poor souls what their portion in the flames must be, and tell them—for Your mercy's sake, tell them—what salvation by Jesus Christ is!

Do you ask me to tell you that before I finish? Do I hear one say, “Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved?” I answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It is written, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” If you will trust in Jesus tonight, you shall be saved.

It does not say such and such a person that believeth, but “he that believeth”—if he has been a drunkard, a swearer, or whatever—“he that believeth, and is baptized”—mark how the two are put together, I dare not sunder what Christ has joined, nor dare I reverse their proper order—“he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Farewell to you, my hearers, for this night, I shall never meet some of you again in this world. Before another Sabbath day is come, your corpse may have been laid in the grave. Which of us shall it be, on whom the hungry teeth of death shall feed, before another Sabbath shall let its chimes be heard? Oh! if you are the man, or if the preacher is the doomed one, may it be fulfilled—

*“Prepare me, Lord, for Thy right hand;
Then come the joyful day;
Come death, and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away.”*

But another says, “I will not enter this chapel anymore, I will never listen to that man again, I will never again hear his voice.” Good-bye, my friend, I hope you will hear someone who will be as faithful to you, and if you find a man who loves you more, or would suffer more for your sake, go and hear him, and God bless him to your soul!

But one says, “I will hear no more of this matter, it is cant, it is nonsense, I will not turn.” Ah! my hearer, if I see you going to destruction, and you know it not, it is none the less destruction because you do not see it.

But another says, “This night I will give myself to Jesus, for I know I want life. I lie down, a corpse, and though I cannot move, I know that, when He passes by, He will give me life.” Go you! God has something for you, go and fall before Him. You shall have life bestowed upon you, go and accept it. For, wherever there is a “now,” it is of God. The Holy Ghost says, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.